

*Readiness to good Works, and Largeness of
Mind in them:*

Recommended in a

Sermon

S E R M O N

Preached in

Gravel-Lane, Southwark,

FOR THE

Benefit of a *Charity-School* there.

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1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy: That they do Good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.

TH E Apostle Paul calls *Timothy*, his own Son in the Faith; intimating, that how many soever his Tutors might have been, it was he who had begotten him. His Grandmother *Lois*, and his Mother *Eunice*, had done their Parts towards forming his Mind aright; 'tis therefore observed of him, that from a Child he had known the Holy Scriptures. When it was, that he first became this great Man's Disciple, does not appear. It is plain he was with him at *Antioch* and *Iconium*; places which *Paul* visited before he came to *Lystra*, where he circumcised *Timothy*. He was afterward treated as a Companion by his Master; sent on several important Messages; and employed in Work most arduous and difficult while a young Man. They had been together in many Places, at length the A-

postle entreats his Favourite *Timothy* to abide for some time at *Ephesus*. He was there to do the Work of an Evangelist, in settling the Churches newly planted: And during his stay here, *Paul* wrote from *Macedonia*, this first Epistle to him.

The Design of this Letter was to fortify *Timothy* against such Discouragements as were likely to attend his being faithful; and direct him in the Discharge of his Office. Here are particular Instructions as to his Preaching, Praying, Governing the Church. In fine, we have here the most compleat and perfect *Directory*, as to the Duties of the ministerial Office, that is to be met with any where in the sacred Writings.

The Chapter where my Text lies (which closeth what the Apostle thought needful to communicate at this Time) treats of the Duty of *Servants*; describes *false Teachers*, commanding us to avoid them; exhorts to *Godliness*; urges to *Contentment*; enlarging upon the Sin and Danger of a covetous Spirit. It mentions several christian and pastoral Vertues, and presses them with the utmost Solemity; adjuring *Timothy* to be an Example of holy Living, and constantly to recommend practical Religion to others, as he wished to be approved of Christ, at his coming. So beautiful, nay essential a Branch of this Holiness, did the Apostle esteem Acts of Charity, duly qualified, to be, that he bestows a distinct Paragraph upon this Article, in the three Verses I have read: *Charge them that are rich*, &c.

In these Words we may observe the following Particulars, worthy of a distinct Consideration.

I. Here

I. Here is a *Duty* which *Timothy* has it in Commission to preach, where he was called to minister. This is referred to, under the Terms, *distribute*, and *communicate*.

II. Here is a further Explanation of the Duty, from several specified *Qualifications* which must attend it. v. g. We are to distribute, and communicate, *readily*, *willingly*, and to be *rich* (or abundant) in such Acts of Beneficence.

III. Here is a variety of *Arguments* to engage us in the practice of this Duty; viz. such Acts of Charity are *good Works*; they shew our *Faith in God*; we are Debtors to him for the Difference between us, and our poor Brethren. Thus we make Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that upon these failing us, we may be received into everlasting Habitations.

The Force and Propriety of the Reasons will be opened to you in the Sequel of this Discourse.

I. We are to consider, in a *general Way*, the Duty which *Timothy* was commissioned to preach, where he was called to minister. This is contained under the Terms *distribute*, and *communicate*. When I remind you that it is the *Rich of this World* whom he was to teach this Lesson, i.e. such as had enough of its uncertain Riches, to put it in their Power to help others, this fixes and determines the Sense of the Expressions; shews the Distribution, and Communicating mentioned, do respect such Things as the Poor want, and the Rich can spare. And this Apostle usually making choice of a Style suited to the Things of which he speaks, either as *expedient only*, or as *necessary*.

necessary, it is not to be supposed that he would have delivered himself in Language so very strong, as that of *Timothy's* charging this on his Hearers, were the Thing charged in its own Nature *indifferent*; what might be done, or left undone, without Sin.

Nor was this Duty *topical* only, and *temporary*, calculated for such a particular *Place*, and obligatory but for a certain *Season*, and then its Obligation to cease. No, it binds all Men who are capable of it; who hear the *Gospel*, and are in a Capacity for yielding Obedience to this Part of God's known Will: it will do so to the end of Time. Our Lord has told us, that the Poor we shall have always with us; and for this Reason, our *Charity* must never cease. Love to God, and to our Neighbours, are an Abridgment of the whole Law. The moral Law, in which is eternal Truth, and Reasonableness, that is indispensable, universally, and perpetually binding. But then, this Love must be operative and practical: * *It is not a fulfilling this royal Law, according to the Scripture, if a Brother or Sister be naked, and destitute of daily Food, and we say to them, depart in Peace, be ye warmed, and filled, while we give them not those Things which are needful for the Body.* It was for another kind of Liberality, the first Professors of our Religion, as Christians, were famous, of whom we read, that all who believed were together, and had all Things in common; none lacked, for as many as were Possessors of Lands, or Houses, sold them, and brought the Price of the Things sold, and

* *James ii. 15, 16.*

Distribution was made unto every Man according as he had need. Christ came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it; this having Things in common, therefore, was not required of these Pro-selytes: Nor is their Example what obliges our Imitation; for this would be destroying the Law in part, a vacating the eighth Command in particular; since where there is no Property, there can be no Theft. I take the Design of the Historian to be, a transmitting to after Ages, the Memory of that extraordinary charitable Disposition, which prevailed in these new Converts; and perhaps, to let us see that the poor Man's Wants are the fittest Measure of our Bounty to him. This however is evident, that soft Words are not Gospel Charity; and that as Faith is dead when alone, so Charity supposes our distributing and communicating, when we have Ability, and Opportunity to all, especially to them who are of the Household of Faith.

The same thing that is *materially* good, may be *circumstantially* evil. It is therefore of Consequence to enquire,

II. How our Charities are to be *qualified*, would we be accepted with God, in what we do. This is the grand Point, which as Christians we should be ambitious to secure in every Article of Obedience; for that Service is lost, in a very proper Sense, which he disapproves. The Apostle leads us to two Things, which must be guarded against, if we would not thus miscarry in Acts of Beneficence and Charity. We must not do them *grudgingly*, nor *sparingly*; not with an *ill Will*, neither with

with a *scanty Hand*. Ye must be *ready* to distribute, says he, and *willing* to communicate; forward to such good Works, for God loves a chearful Giver: And as liberal Men ye must devise liberal Things; be *rich* in good Works, as well as *ready* to them.

When our Charities are duly qualified, they are *1st.* What flow from a *willing Mind*. Some Men are like the unjust Judge, what of this sort they do, is torn from them thro' the dint of Importunity; neither Love to God, nor their Neighbour, have the least Influence to open their Hearts, or Hands. Of such it may said, that did they give all their Goods to the Poor, and their Bodies to be burned, they want Charity. The Widow's Mite was therefore the largest Sum cast into the Treasury, because God accepts according to what a Man has, and not according to what he has not, where there is a *willing Mind*. This is one of the good Things he has shewn to Man, and required of him, that he should *love Mercy* *; and as he has freely received, he should freely give: And whosoever hath this World's Goods, and seeing his Brother in need, shuts up his *Bowels of Compassion* from him, the Love of God cannot dwell in him.† We are not only to shew Mercy, but to love it; and if our Hearts are hardened against our Brother, we fail in a main Part, tho' our Hands minister to his Necessities.

A good Man should remember the Words of our Lord Jesuſ, how he ſaid, that it is more bleſſed

* *Micah vi. 8.* † *John iii. 17.*

fed to give than to receive: And there are those whom his Love and Example so far constrain, that the most Distressed feel not a larger Pleasure in the supply of their Wants, than they have done in feeding the Hungry, and cloathing the Naked; or preventing Things coming to this Extremity with their fellow Creatures, and fellow Christians, which is not a less noble Instance of Charity. The Grace of God doth regulate and improve, it does not destroy our natural Tempers. Some Men are born with a Largeness of Mind; it is so far from being a Force upon them, to shew a general good Will to Mankind, that they must offset Violence to themselves in not doing so: But wheresoever God has transformed a Man, by the renewing of his Mind, that Person is hereby determined for universal Obedience; Faith and Love are his governing Principles; and as far as he acts consistently with himself, and under the Influence of the Grace of God, be he never so close and narrow, he will be ready on fit Occasions to distribute, and willing to communicate; i. e. he cannot but with Chearfulness do, what God has made it his Duty to do. God is a Spirit, and requires spiritual Worship. In the good Things we do therefore, he keeps his Eye upon our Hearts; where these are absent, the most pompous Sacrifices are vain Oblations. Let us bring this to the Case before us: The Man whose Money is extorted as it were, however moving the Call to his Charity, does Good to the miserable whom he believes; but loses all the Advantage which might otherwise accrue from it to himself.

himself. We must not only do what God requires, but as he commands it, if we would look for his Approbation; and put in for the Comfort which arises from a Reflection upon Obedience that is hearty and sincere.

2dly. As we should be *ready* to such good Works, we should likewise be *rich* in them.

I mentioned before, God's accepting according to what a Man has, if there be a willing Mind; but then it is supposed that he is ready to glorify God in Proportion to what he has. A pair of Turtles may express as much Affection, Duty, Zeal for God in the Offerer, as whole Hecatoms: But if the Nature of the Case we are called to encourage requires it, and our Circumstances in Life will allow of our giving more than a Cup of cold Water, to the indigent Creature or Disciple, then acting within that Compafs, which would be Charity in another, is not sufficient to give us a Claim to the Character of charitable. Some Men whom we cannot call backward to such Services, are yet so far from imitating that God who gives *liberally*, that altho' they wallow in the Fulness of this World's Goods, and need more Barns where to bestow their Increase, they are really fearful of acting with Generosity of Mind, as if what they lent to the Lord, was not only lost, but would prove as a Moth, Rust, Canker, to eat up what was behind. It is true, that we should be just as well as charitable. He who builds Hospitals upon the Beggary of his Family, or Plunder of his Neighbour, offering Robbery for Sacrifice must be hated

hated of the Lord ; but it may be affirmed without Hazard, that some Mens Care for their Families (the most plausible Excuse for strait-hand-edness in Acts of Charity) is little better than downright Infidelity : They will pretend to trust God with their Souls, who will not trust him with their Purse ; and one Reason why many leave no more when they die, is their having done so little while they live. They die poor, because afraid of being rich in good Works. God has punished their Distrust of him with a Blast ; they have sown and watered, and the Harvest proved but a few thin Ears ; for it is he that returns the Bread multiplied, which for many Days has been cast upon the Waters ; so many that an Eye of Sense would judge it to have been lost there.

He who is a thorough Christian regards God as the Proprietor of what he is, and has ; knows that it is his Duty with his Substance, as well as with his Body, and Soul, which are the Lord's, to glorify him. He dares not offer the lame and blind when there is a Male in the Flock ; but lays by as God blesses him, honouring him with the first Fruits of his Increase. I think that no Man has a Right to determine how high our Liberality must reach, to acquit ourselves in this Matter as Christians : The Scriptures have not as to us however, been thus parti-cular ; but this is a Rule may be laid down without Injury to any Man's Liberty, that the Ur-gency of the Case, the Importance of it, and the Circumstances or Ability of the Benefactor,

settle the Measure of acting. I would be tender of saying, that Man was in the wrong, who on certain Occasions has even straightened himself, to keep another from being miserable; or to relieve him when actually so. The Apostle records it to the Honour of the Believers at *Corinth*, that their deep Poverty abounded to the Riches of their Liberality; for to their Power, and *beyond* their Power, they were willing.*

The Way thus far prepared, we proceed

III. To take a View of the *Arguments*, by which the Practice of the Duty we have been explaining, is urged upon us. They are well chosen; have an obvious Aptitude, and Propriety, to strike a serious Mind, and leave upon it the intended Impressions. Charge them to be chearful, and abundant, in the Offices of Charity; for

1st. These are *good Works* †. That they do *Good*; that they be rich in *good Works*, ready to *distribute*, willing to *communicate*. Of *Tabitha*, or *Dorcas*, it is said, that she was a Woman full of *good Works*, and *Alms-Deeds*: The Widows stood by *Peter* when she was deceased weeping, and shewing the Coats she had made while with them. || The Redeemed of the Lord are a peculiar People, zealous of *good Works*; i. e. of *Acts* of Piety toward God, and *Acts* of Charity toward their Neighbours. As the Christian's Obedience is sincere, so it is impartial; the same Mind being in him, that was in Christ Jesus: He endeavours to tread in his Steps, and to walk

* 2 Cor. viii. 2, 3. † 18 Ver. of this Chap. || Acts xix. 36, 39.

even as he walked ; to copy after his munificent and sympathizing Temper, of whom it is said, that in all our Afflictions he was afflicted ; that he bore our Sorrows and Griefs, whose first Appearance in our World (as the Word made Flesh) was thus introduced by the Angels of Light, who gave the Notice of his coming, Peace on Earth, and good Will toward Men.

Can it be difficult to apprehend, how fitly such are called *good Works*, which bespeak our Conformity to his Example, who went about doing Good ? Our Obedience to his Will, who has charged us that to communicate we forget not ; that credit Religion ? are Evidences of our Faith, and Love unfeigned ? and by which the Blessings of those, who were ready to perish, came upon us ?

How fit an Argument is this, to work upon an ingenuous Mind ? Am I as a Christian, to be furnished to every good Work ? then it is no longer in my Option, whether to do this, or forbear it. The Thing is not expedient only, but necessary ; it cannot be indifferent, it must be Duty, consequently the Omission of it, Sin. I am bound to defend the Poor and Fatherless ; to relieve the Poor and Needy, as I would not be found a Rebel against the highest Authority ; or except against what may be reckoned the weightier Matters of the Law. To fall in with every Call of Providence to be useful and helpful to others ; whether the Charity is of a more contracted and private Nature,

ture, or of a more publick and extensive Kind ; whether it respects this, or that Man only ; or one, wherein the Spread and Encouragement of the Gospel is concerned ; the early modelling, and framing aright tender Minds in these Schools, which are designed as Seminaries for the Church ; and to turn young ones, for an honest and vertuous Behaviour, in civil and social Life. This is a faithful Saying, these Things I will that you constantly affirm (says *Paul to Titus*) that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good Works : What these are, is explained in the following Words, *viz.* Things good and profitable to Men.* We are to consider one another, to provoke one another to Love, and to these good Works ; since thus, instead of being spoken against, as merely speculative and theoretical Christians, they who behold us will glorify God in the Day of Visitation.

But a Duty so essential, and ornamental to Christianity, may be urged by other Arguments. We are supplied with other in the Text : We may produce this,

2dly. That the Largeness of Mind, and Openness of Hand, recommended to Christians, are made Evidences of their *Faith in God*. Their Faith in his being, that *he is*; their Faith in his remunerative Goodness, that *he is a Rewarder*. By *thus* inverting the Order of the Words, and it will not disturb their Sense, the Remark will be sufficiently vindicated. *e.g.* They who

do good, who are ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, trust not in their uncertain Riches, but they trust in the living God. They make not Gold their Hope, nor say to the fine Gold, thou art our Confidence: As they look not for their Portion in this Life, they do not lay up to themselves Treasures on Earth. The just Man lives by *Faith*, which he who well knew its Nature defined *thus*, it is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen: He parts with a present Good, upon the Prospect of something better in Reversion. God's Promise is an abundant Security, for such as know his Name will put their Trust in him; and he grows not weary of well-doing, believing that he shall reap, if he faints not. He knows that in giving to the Poor, he lendeth to the Lord, and that he will repay him; that the Man who mocketh the Poor, reproacheth his Maker; and he who is glad at Calamities shall not be unpunished.

Should it be said, there is little or no Proof of his Trust in God, when a rich Man distributeth out of his Abundance; for admitting that he giveth largely, yet he has always enough behind to secure him against the fear of Poverty; and the Charge in the Text is directed to such as are *rich* in this World.

I answer. By the Rich (as was hinted before) we are not obliged to understand those only, who ride upon the high Places of the Earth, and who feed on the finest of the Wheat; but we may conceive of it, as including those

in whose Power it is to give an helping Hand in the Affair of Charity, though in a much lower State than the first ; and this stretches the Term to a large Compass ; for to whom almost, may not this be applied, in a larger or less Degree ? It is from a lively Faith in the Offerer, that his most liberal Alms-Deeds come up as a Memorial before God ; without Faith, it is impossible to please him. Now his Abundance forbids not the rich Man's believing Regards to God, as one most fit to appoint Duty, and fully qualified to reward it. It may sometimes be our Duty to give, when we have but little to spare ; cannot well want what we bestow, having no immediately visible Prospect of a Recruit. The Widow is applauded, who of her *Want* did cast in all that she had, even *all her Living**. This is being strong in Faith indeed, when a Conviction of Duty does cause us in Hope, to believe against Hope ; and it may be, that trusting of God, in their Acts of Charity, is eminently found among those Worthies, who tho' among the Poor of this World, are rich in Faith, and emulous of appearing among the richest in good Works.

Well, let us examine the Strength of this Argument. Do I believe (says the Christian) that the Eye of God is upon me ? that he observes, whether with a willing or reluctant Mind I give at his Call ? whether with a liberality suitable to the Case, and my Condition ? or whether mine be scanty, and dispropor-

* *Mark xii. 24.*

portioned Charity? that he now looks on, to see how far his Commands have Influence, his Promises encourage? how far my Faith carries me, and where I refuse to trust even God himself? Can we suppose that the Christian, to whom the Affair appears in this Light, will want an Heart to give freely, and bountifully too? that he won't embrace the Occasion gladly, to shew his Faith, by his Works? that he is not a sounding Brass, and tinckling Cymbal? zealous for the Form, while careless of the Power of Godliness?

3dly. We go on to another Argument, which shall be *this*; we are urged to the Practice of this Duty, from the Consideration of our being wholly indebted to Providence, for the Inequality in Circumstances, between us and our poorest Brethren. He is high-minded, *q. d.* who does not acknowledge as to the living God, that it is he *who giveth us* all Things richly to enjoy. He is the Maker of all made Things; his therefore are the Worlds, and all the Fulness of them; and as sovereign Lord, and absolute Proprietor, he divides to every Man, severally as he willeth: Unto one he gives five Talents, to another two, and to another one; to every Man according to his several Ability*. Upon the renewal of the Promise to the *Israelites*, in reference to their entring upon the Land of Canaan to possess it, God saw it meet to give them *this* Caution; beware,

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* Mat. xxv. 15.

says he, that ye forget not the Lord your God; that when ye have eaten and are full, have builded goodly Houses, and dwell therein; when your Herds and Flocks multiply; your Silver and Gold, and all that ye have is multiplied, your Heart be lifted up, and ye say (any of ye say) my Power, and the Might of mine Hand hath gotten me this Wealth; thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is *he* that giveth thee Power to get Wealth*. The Race is not always to the Swift, the Battle to the Strong, Bread to the Wise, Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them all. There is nothing cometh to pass, which God's Hand and Council have not before determined. When he wills, nothing shall let. Therefore Matters do often take a Turn, not only less agreeable to the seemingly natural Connection of Things; but quite different from what, upon merely rational Principles, we might expect; to convince us that all Events are under a divine Superintendence, and the Disposal of them, is from the Lord. Now the Argument turns *here*, the Rich of this World are but Stewards of the manifold Grace of God; and it is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful; that he lays out what is intrusted to his Care, so as to give a good Account of his Stewardship, when he shall be no longer Steward. It is
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* Deut. viii. from the 11th to 19th.

my Duty, as a Christian, to be merciful, for my Father in Heaven is merciful. That I may have Opportunities of exercising myself this way, a wise Providence supplies with Objects; Men in much lower Life than myself; not because either less worthy, or less dear; but it is even so, Father, because thus it hath seemed good in thy Sight. By their Mouths, God calleth upon me to distribute; by their Hands receiveth a Part of the large Stock intrusted to my Care. I am sure, a Man truly good, will no more be backward to these good Offices, while under a due Impression from this Argument, than he will dare to dispute with his Maker, or wage War with Heaven. It matters but little (will such an one say) whether I have the Part of a Prince, or of a Peasant to act; the main Busines is to acquit myself well, as one who sets God continually before me, and lives in the belief of a Providence, and a Judgment to come. The more God has committed to me, the more does he righteously require from me. It is my Duty to be active, useful, fruitful, faithful; that I may at length give up mine Account with Joy, and not with Grief; that I may have Confidence before Christ my Judge, and neither be ashamed, nor afraid at his coming.

But this Thought may be further pursued under the

4th. Head of Arguments, which is this; the Christian does in this Way lay up a good

Foundation against the Time to come, when he shall lay hold of eternal Life. It is a wretched Abuse of the Doctrine of good Works, when Men are taught to trust in them, or to depend upon them, as meritorious of the divine Favour; or their justifying Righteousness before God. Does a Master thank his Servant, because he did the Things which were commanded him? (says our Lord) I trow not. So likewise ye, applying this to his Disciples, and to all who to the end of the World should believe in him thro' their Word, when ye have done all these Things which were commanded you, say we are unprofitable Servants; we have done that which was our Duty to do*. It is not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but of his Mercy that he saveth us; boasting on that Foot shall be for ever excluded; and such as glory, glory in the Lord alone.

But the Advantage arising from an Exemplariness in this Article of Duty, may be great, though we do not pretend to make God our Debtor; or merit by returning at his Call, even a large Proportion of what he has freely given us. The wisest of mere Men was of this Mind, when he advised the giving a Portion to seven, and also to eight, for that we knew not what Evil should be upon the Earth. He thought this was a Way to entail a Blessing upon what was behind; and to have the Lord deliver *us* in the Day of Trouble.

* Luke xvii. 9, 10.

Trouble. Every Instance of hearty and sincere Obedience yields Pleasure upon the Reflection. Acts of generous Charity, as the Evidences of a Faith, working by Love, are Matter of our rejoicing, and contribute not a little towards our being privileged with that Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding.

Nay, we are exhorted by a patient Continuance in well doing, to look for Glory, Honour, Immortality, and eternal Life; are told, that God will not be unfaithful to forget our Work, and Labour of Love, in that we have minister'd, and do minister: And how significant the Remembrance which shall be had of these Services in the next World, our Lord himself informs us. He presents us with a general Plan of the last Judgment, telling us, that as to good Men, the Case will proceed *thus*; the King shall say to them on the right Hand, Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye cloathed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in Prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done these Things to one of the least of my Brethren, ye have done them unto me*. In the Judgment every Man shall receive according to his Works: God

* Mat. xxv. from the 34th.

God will crown his own Grace, in their Glorification who have endured to the End, and been faithful unto Death ; and then shall they fully understand the Meaning of these Words, blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.

The Task will be easy, in shewing you the Beauty and Force of this Argument.

Would you have the Blessing of God, on your Basket and Store ? the Testimony of a good Conscience, both living and dying, to be your Rejoicing ? shew yourselves Patterns of good Works. Would you in the next World, have *this* Commendation from him, who shall judge both the Quick and the Dead, well done, good and faithful Servants ? ye have been faithful over a few Things, and I will make you Rulers over many Things, enter ye into the Joy of your Lord ? Boggle not at any Duty however difficult or expensive ; glorify his Name upon Earth ; do the Work he has given you to do ; be hearty in maintaining his Gospel ; tender hearted, and pitiful to his Poor ; lay yourselves out to spread the Savour of his Knowledge in every Place, where you have any Influence. A Faith thus productive of good Works, is a Faith of the Operation of God ; and when you receive the End of it, as his free Gift to you, it will be the Salvation of your Souls.

Possibly more Arguments to the Practice of this Duty, may be found in the Text : These which I have mentioned, seemed to

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me the most obvious. If God is pleased to set them home on Conscience, they will answer my Design, which was to encourage the benevolent Temper, which will make you publick Blessings ; and that Fidelity to your Trust, which shall be remembered with Honour, when God's Approbation most desireable ; his Smile worth a thousand Worlds.

It now remains that we apply this Discourse in a practical Way.

1st. What has been said, should fasten a Conviction of Guilt upon such who calling themselves Christians, are yet habitually estranged from this Branch of practical Religion. There are too many of these, whose Christianity is all at their Tongue's End, who wear Christ's Livery, and yet are Men of this World ; they like a Religion that will cost them nothing : But should Christ himself say to them, as he said to the hopeful Youth in the Gospel, sell what ye have, give to the Poor, and ye shall have Treasure in Heaven, like him, they would go away sorrowful, as tho' Possessions on Earth were foolishly exchanged for distant, invisible, reversionary Glory. Whoever these Men are, however dignified or distinguished, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, Ministers are to charge this upon them in God's Name, as a Sin for which they shall be accountable to him. These are Clouds without Water ; they are Trees without Fruit ; Spots in our Feasts ; a Re-proach to the Name which is named upon them ;

them ; they are a Grief to good Men, and the unhappy Occasions of confirming wicked ones in their Impiety. An uncharitable Christian, is a palpable Contradiction. Such would do well to quit his Name, who are resolved to walk so contrary to the Example which the Redeemer has set them.

2dly. The best of us should be quickened in our Duty, by what we have heard, and made more abundant in this Work of the Lord. How many Opportunities have slipt the most generous, and liberal minded ? how many more in which our Works have not been found *perfect*, or filled up*, before God ? We have either failed as to the Readiness which was our Duty, or the Largenes^s which was in the Power of our Hands. How soon will the Season be over of imitating God in this Instance ? There are no miserable Objects above, Earth and Hell are the only Seats of Sorrow ; and your Salvation, Christians, is every Day nearer. Suffer me to lodge this Appeal with you ; have you ever mist what you freely gave, upon right Principles, and to a right End, to the Service of God ? have you been ever the nearer Want, for your Liberality on this Score ? do you think that when dying it will disturb you to remember your having giving so much, upon this, or t'other important moving Occasion ? or if you have Uneasiness on the review of this Part of Life, is it not more likely it will arise from a Consciousness

* Rev. iii. 2. πεπληρωμένας ἡμέτερον τῷ Θεῷ.

ness to your Defects, and Penury upon these Occasions?

O Christians, go on, in God's Name, in a Work so honourable to Religion; serviceable to Mankind; full of good Fruits to yourselves, living, dying, and after Death. Do all the Good you can, while working Time lasts, the Night cometh when no Man can work. So employ yourselves, as you would wish to be found doing at the approach of your Lord, who will bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. And having endeavoured to walk in all his Ordinances, and Commandments blameless, through the various Stages of Life, look to the Mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal Life. Value your good Works, as they justify your Faith, bespeak your hearty Affection to the blessed God, and Devotedness to his Will; but renounce them with Abhorrence, as far as Men or Devils would tempt you to be proud of them: for other Foundation can no Man lay, than what is laid, even Christ Jesus. Both our Persons and Services become acceptable through his beloved Son. Ye know these Things, and happy shall ye be, if ye do them.

Before I conclude, let me tell you, there is a Case I have to mention, the recommending which to your charitable Regards, led my Thoughts to the Subject before us. I cannot but wish that your generous Consideration of it, may give me Reason to hope, that ye are not the Hearers of the Word only, but Doers

of the same. The Case is that of the Charity-School, distinguished by the Character of *Gravel-Lane, Southwark.*

Its History, as it comes to me, I shall lay before you in a few Words.

The Foundation of this School was laid in the Year 1687, a critical Time; one in which we should have been forward to purchase the Privileges we now enjoy, almost at any Expence. This fixes its Original further back, than any other among *us* can pretend to. It was opened with a Provision made for the Education of *forty* Children; but through the Blessing of God, upon the Undertaking, it soon rose in its Reputation and Interest, to a Sufficiency for entertaining of *fifty*. According to its first Settlement, these were to be taught to Read, Write, Cypher, and instructed in the *Assemblies Catechism*, which ancient Orders are faithfully observed. I own, I am sorry that *Book* should so far sink in its Reputation, in an Age which boasts greatly of free Enquiry, and growing light; nor can I see any Inconsistency between our maintaining the most sacred Regard to the Bible, as the alone *Standard and Rule of Faith*, and our esteeming this highly in its Place, as an excellent *Summary of Christian Doctrine*.

From their first setting out, their Principles were *Catholick*, no party Distinctions taking place, unless the Necessitousness of the distinguished Object may be termed so. This School prospered by Degrees, so as to have the Numbers

bers received into it, swell to an hundred. And like the morning Light, which shines still more and more, they under whose Direction and Conduct this Affair hath been, have been enabled to erect a *second School*, as a sort of Nursery for the first. This entertains *twenty* Children more, of tenderer Years. Subscriptions though precarious Things, two yearly Collections, and now and then a Legacy, have hitherto supported the Charge, which cannot be small, especially when I add the giving Bibles, Testaments, and Catechisms, as Articles in their yearly Expence. Several have from hence been helped into the World, who probably would not have been able to make their own Way : And there are others daily ripening for publick Life, as Masters, and Trades agreeable shall be found for them. Such an Undertaking, you will allow, is not to be prosecuted but with Difficulty, with certain, and very large Cost. Our Circumstances in Life are floating and unsettled; what is less sure than Life itself ? We are this Day entered upon a new Year, but who of us can say, that this may not prove his last? and that this Year he shall die? The *Managers* are neither tired of their Weight, nor sinking under it ; yet wisely look about them, that their Hands may be strengthened, by their finding others like-minded; therefore by me, they do request your Assistance.

Does not the Case speak for itself? if the Representation already given, recommend it not, it is hardly in my Power to help it : I

hope it will to every considerate Mind. If this be a good Work, remember, I beseech you, the Obligations you are under to countenance and encourage it: it is laying out your Money to the best Advantage, and upon the best Security; Considerations which seldom fail, when urged upon us in the Matters of common Life. Shew your Faith in God, by your open heartedness, as you would desire an Interest in his Blessedness who considers the Poor; and who by the Strength of his Faith gives Glory to God. Such as honour him, he will honour; though such as despise him shall be lightly esteemed. Should you think of putting this off to a more convenient Season, that Season may never come. You have a fair Opportunity presents this Day, and a loud Call to the Duty; set in with them, act as in God's Sight and Fear; do your Parts towards securing a Seed to serve him, when you shall go the Way of all Flesh, and the Clods of the Valley shall cover you. From the rising Generation are our Hopes; and though God's special Grace is not intailed upon the most regular Education (for when Children have been trained up, in the Way they should go, they do too often depart from it) yet our Duty is to contribute our best this Way, following our Alms with our Prayers, and leaving the Event to God. Should you but in part, and more *remotely*, help to the turning a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, saving a Soul from Death, and hiding a Multitude of Sins, how ample the Reward

Reward, of your pious Charity? and to decline an attempting this, as well as you can, may leaye too much Room for painful Reflection.

I have nothing more that I shall offer to you Christians; but suffer me to drop a few wholesome Advices to these little Ones, whose Cause I have been pleading, that I may do my Duty to them, as I trust I have done to you. I would teach them as they are able to bear.

Your Circumstances, Children, as needing the Assistance of Strangers, to give you these Helps towards getting your Bread, should humble you betimes; happy this frame of Mind; highly pleasing to God, and promising of his Blessing. Pride becomes none; but let me tell you, it is especially unseemly in such as you. When this Vice begins to work in your tender Minds, oppose it by the Remembrance of that low Condition, which at present however, the all-wise God sees best for you. God gives Grace to the Humble, will teach the Meek his Ways, but sees the Proud afar off, and resists him.

That God should put it into the Hearts of so many, thus to befriend you, should make you *thankful*; thankful to God, in the first Place, who has all Mens Hearts in his Hands, and turns them at his Pleasure, like the Rivers of Water. What a good God is this, who has taken you up, when Father, or Mother, or both have forsaken you? or were incapable, in this Point, of helping you? How many others, every way as necessitous, and as deserving, are bred

bred in Ignorance? are Vagrants? yet God has cared for you. And while he has your first and choicest Praises, beware of Ingratitude to those who are God's *Instruments*, for so much good to you.

Behave with *tractable* Tempers, towards them who have more immediately the Care of your Education; thus youf profiting will sooner appear. Mind your Books with Diligence; but above all Things mind your Souls. All shall be welcome, who are willing to come to Christ, but such as seek him *early*, shall be sure to find him. Flee youthful Lusts, and follow Righteousness; avoid evil Companions, as you would shun the Plague; make Conscience of spending your common Time, but especially of sanctifying the Lord's Day. Think, that as young as you are, you are old enough to die: and that after Death is the Judgment. Begin in the Dawning of Life, with an Eye to Eternity. The more these Thoughts possess you, you will find their happy Effect and Influence upon restraining you from presumptuous Sins, cleansing you from secret Faults, putting you upon your Duty, and quickening you in it: learn, pray, converse, as dying Creatures; if such a Mind be in you, it is a most kindly Token. He that has given you Hearts to love, fear, and choose him, is a Friend that will never forsake you; he will rejoice over you to do you Good; will give you Grace and Glory, and with-hold no needful good Thing from you. May the Lord write these Instructions upon the fleshly Tables
of

ef your Hearts. May they remain as a Nail in a sure Place, fastened by the Hand of the great Master of Assemblies. Thus, if you live, you will live to the Lord ; when you die, will die to the Lord ; and whether you live, or die, will be the Lord's.

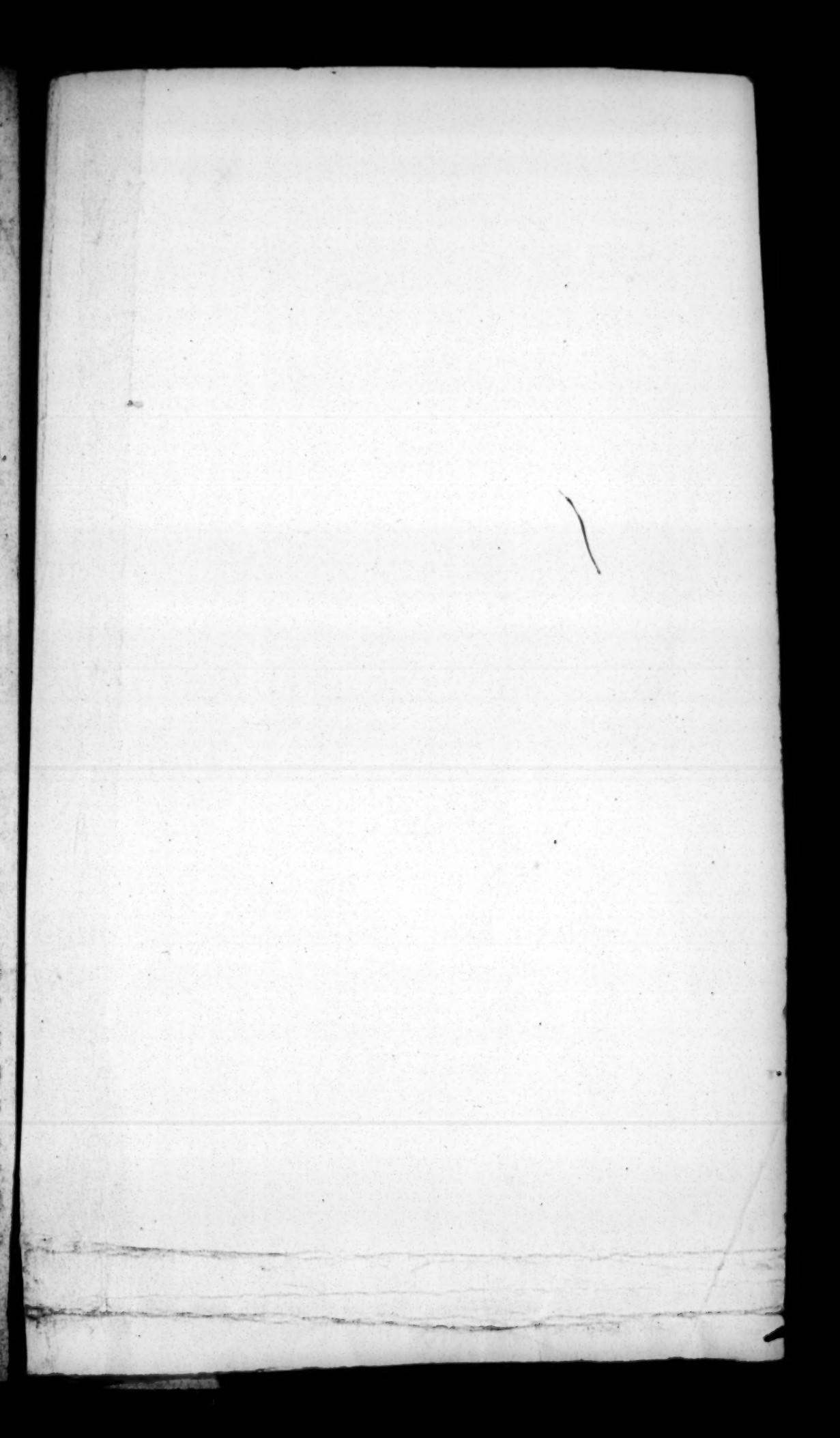
Nor will it be improper, before I conclude, to subjoin a Word two, to the *Master* and *Mistress* of these Schools.

My Friends, ye have a great Trust committed to you, see that ye fulfil it. Take what Opportunities offer, for instilling good Principles into your tender Charge, and giving them a right Turn as to the best Things : They are susceptible of good Impressions, sooner it may be than ye imagine. If ye would insinuate yourselves into their Hearts, do not rule over them with Rigour : It is much better they should be kept in due Subjection to your Authority, from Love, than through Fear. Be yourselves Examples to them of a serious Spirit, and of a circumspect godly Life. Shew them the Practicableness of Religion, by going before them in it. Continue to pray for them, as well as with them ; thus ye may find your Work in all the other Branches of it, going on with more Ease and Success ; and that many who at present promise little, may hereafter rise up, and call you blessed. Never forget, that besides the Eye of the Managers, ye have the Eye of God upon you ; that your Fidelity will be pleasing to him, and your Negligence resented as a Crime. May the God

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